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### From city marketing to city branding

Kavaratzis, M.

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## Chapter 7

# Marketing Athens



## Chapter 7      **Marketing Athens: Surprise yourself in Athens Attica**

### ***7.1 Introduction***

Athens, the capital of Greece, is a city with a long and glorious past of more than 3,000 years of recorded history. Very few cities can claim to have played as significant a role in world history as Athens. Well known as the birthplace of democracy and the cradle of western civilisation due to several political, artistic and scientific achievements mainly in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, Athens is dominated by the Acropolis with the impressive Parthenon still overlooking the modern city (figure 7.1). Athens was named the capital of the New Greek State in 1833 ([www.astynet.gr](http://www.astynet.gr)) and since then dominates the political, economic and cultural life of the country. A milestone in the city's contemporary development has been the successful organisation of the 2004 Summer Olympic Games, which has played a catalytic role in shaping the physical and operational environment of the city and its region. It might have a decisive effect on the region's development prospects and international image and it has triggered several developments in the field of devising and refining a marketing strategy for the city.

This chapter describes the marketing efforts of Athens and its region in the Post-Olympic era. The chapter starts with a brief description of the Athens Metropolitan Area and goes on to outline the past marketing efforts and current marketing goals of the Greek capital. It then proceeds to an account of the heritage that the Olympic Games have left behind with a particular focus on their effect on the image of the city. Two parts of this heritage directly referring to the implementation of city marketing in Athens are further investigated. First, the establishment of the Athens Tourism and Economic Development Agency, an organisation set up to coordinate the marketing effort of the city, is described and its goals and actions investigated. Secondly, the campaign that the Region of Attica undertook right after the Olympics in order to promote the region as a tourism destination is analysed.

Figure 7.1: Athens: view of the Acropolis and Lycabettus



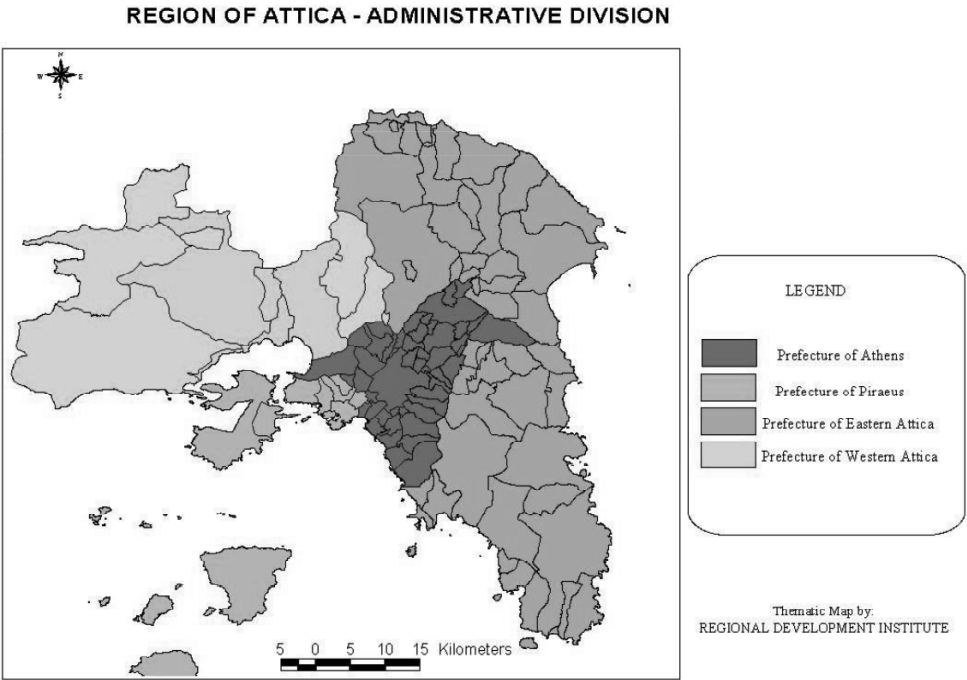
## ***7.2 Athens Metropolitan Area***

The wider Athens Metropolitan Area is an area with a population of almost 4 million inhabitants (NSSG 2007). The city has developed into a large and lively metropolis characterised, though, by several problems of large urban areas and particularly “all the spatial disadvantages of larger cities in the European periphery: unplanned residential areas on the outskirts, lacking or obsolescent infrastructure, degraded urban fabric, traffic congestion, environmental pollution” (Beriatos and Gospodini 2004:192). Among others, two events have heavily influenced the current condition of the city. The first was the immigration of several hundreds of thousands of Greeks living in Asia Minor in 1922, after the Smyrna Massacre, whose number and housing needs were overwhelming for the city (the population doubled from 453,000 in 1921 to 802,000 in 1927). The second has been “the rapid and unregulated economic and physical growth experienced in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, due

to extensive rural immigration” (Beriatos and Gospodini 2004:192). This period saw extensive construction in open spaces and the demolition of most of the city’s neoclassical mansions and other buildings, which gave their place to apartment blocks aiming to house the rapidly rising population of the capital. Together with the effects of these two events, the development of the city has obviously been based on a logic that favoured the car as a means of transportation and that has caused the absolute dependency of the Athenians on their car; a fact that creates several problems and hinders the solution of others.

The administrative structure of the Attica region is rather complicated and certainly fragmented. There are in total 157 municipalities and communes in the whole area ([www.astynet.gr](http://www.astynet.gr)), the largest one being the Municipality of Athens with 750,000 residents. The region is divided into four prefectures (Athens, Piraeus, West Attica and East Attica), two of which also comprise the so-called Super-Prefecture of Athens-Piraeus (figure 7.2). The prefectures and municipalities lie by law in the same level of hierarchy and all have their own elected leaders and councils. The regional authority is the Region of Attica (one of thirteen in the country). In addition to these, as the capital of the country and the place of residence of more than one third of its population, Athens receives significant attention from the central government. This administrative structure, coupled with the long lasting Greek mentality that is certainly not characterised by a culture of agreement and cooperation, cause some serious setbacks to the city’s development efforts. As Coccossis *et al.* (2003:2) describe, “... [c]ooperation is stifled by weaknesses of its lower level partners (the local authorities) and the lack of a coordinating framework at a metropolitan level. In the few cases where such structures exist (such as water management, bus transport, Olympic Games 2004 etc.) these are ad hoc administrative arrangements”. The same authors further identify that “the actual role of the private sector and civic society (professional associations and other partners) has to be, more or less, invented” and “as far as the third, or informal, sector is concerned, the non-governmental organisations are underrepresented in Greece” (Coccossis *et al.* 2003:8). The administrative fragmentation, the lack of structural cooperation and the under-representation of civil society are certainly obstacles to any comprehensive use of city marketing as well, despite a newly found direction evident in the city after the 2004 Olympics.

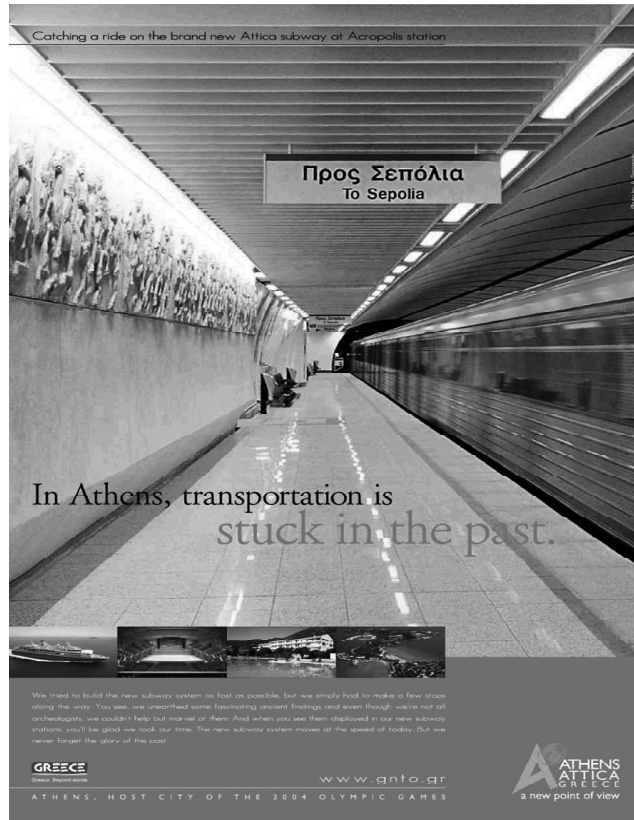
Figure 7.2 Map of the prefectures of the region of Attica



**7.3 City marketing before 2004**

Place marketing in the past has not been used in any comprehensive form in Greece, with, perhaps, the minor exception of the promotional campaigns of the Greek National Tourism Organisation (GNTO) for the country as a whole, which have always been purely promotional activities with no evident marketing plan behind them. Even place promotion for tourism development has been treated with a “communicational lightness” (SETE 2004:24) and has been characterised by extreme instability and inconsistency. This is clearly illustrated in the series of slogans and logos devised to promote the country: in the fourteen years between 1991 and 2004, the GNTO has used eight different logos and ten different slogans in its promotional material (SETE 2004). As one of the interviewees stated, “since 1990, every two years we change our logo. In 2004, during an Olympic year, we were using two different logos! In this way there is no consistency, the logos cannot be recognised or create any association with Greece. We

Figure 7.3: Example of the promotional campaign of Athens in 2003



only transfer to other people our own schizophrenia...” (interview with promotion officer of GNTO).

The city of Athens has not escaped the same fate. Apart from some sporadic GNTO posters advertising Athens, the first ever promotional campaign of the city and its region was designed again by the GNTO during the preparation for the Olympics in order to promote the new infrastructure that was being built (figure 7.3).

As one of the interviewees described, “marketing Athens is still in an embryonic stage. Before the Athens Economic and Tourism Development Agency (ATEDA) was set up, marketing Athens meant that the Mayor went to several cities around the world, gave interviews and talked about Athens. There was some kind of communication tactic but not strategic marketing, exactly because of the lack of an organisation like the ATEDA” (interview with ATEDA General Manager).



Promotion of Athens was done either by the GNTO or by the tourism sector (e.g. Chamber of Hoteliers, Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises SETE) with no cooperation between them and no coordination of their activities. Another interviewee identified two reasons for that. First, that “local authorities in Greece do not really have development responsibilities (in theory they could offer tax incentives, for instance, to attract industries but no one has ever done it), apart from the Regions through European Regional Programmes. Second, “that Greece is missing an understanding of urban marketing that would connect promotion to a wider development policy” (interview with executive secretary of Ministry of Tourism).

The recent tourism-related problem of Athens was that it had lost a major part of its previous visitors’ base due to changing conditions in the wider tourism environment. In the past, there used to be two main sources of visitors. First, a large percentage of tourist arrivals to Greece used to arrive by charter or scheduled flights, most of them landing in Athens; now most charter flights fly directly to the islands and other destinations. The emergence of low-cost carriers compensates only a little. Second, most cruise packages in the Aegean and East Mediterranean include a 3-4 nights stay in Athens (interview with promotion officer of GNTO) but the cruise market is in decline, something that the GNTO is trying to reverse. These were major losses for Athens as it had lost the support it used to receive from most other Greek destinations, i.e. the few nights spent in the capital by most tourists on their way to other places in Greece. To address this problem, the attempt is to establish Athens as a destination for urban tourism, which is understood as “...directed towards high-income visitors from the international community and harmoniously combining some of the most important tourism activities: conference, cultural, gastronomic and luxury tourism” (Ikonomou 2007:42). Within that goal, establishing Athens as a top European city-break destination and the development and rise of conference tourism were clearly indicated by all interviewees as the leading priorities. As will be shown below, there are signs that make these goals attainable, provided that an acceleration of developments will first be achieved.

## ***7.4 The legacy of the Olympic Games***

The Olympic Games of 2004 have been a milestone in the history of Athens and its development. Despite intense criticism by the international press before the Games that the venues would not be completed on time, the Athens 2004 Olympics have admittedly been a successful event causing a positive surprise to the international community<sup>1</sup>. However, the costs associated with the Games,

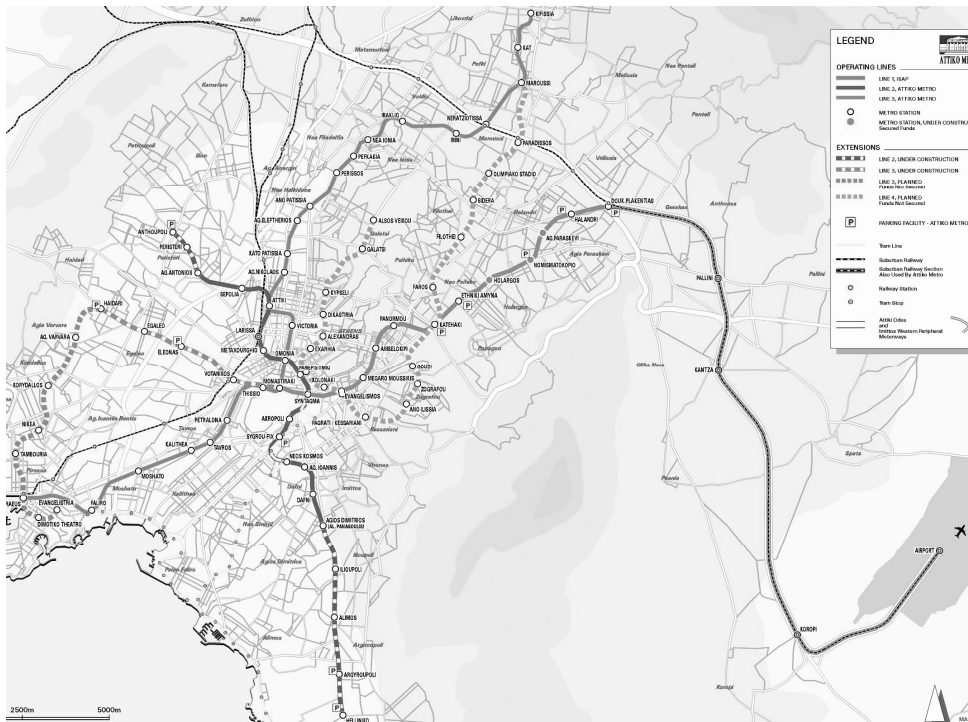
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<sup>1</sup> The titles of foreign newspaper after the Games are indicative: “Expectations surpassed by Athens” The Sunday Times; “The Greeks got it right: the people were endlessly hospitable, the transport was immaculate

their wider effects on the city's development and especially the matter of the potential post-Olympic use of the facilities continue to nourish conflicts in the Greek political agenda (e.g. Kartalis 2007; Lialios 2007). It is not the purpose of this chapter to evaluate all aspects of the Olympic legacy in Athens but to focus on the effect of the Games on marketing the city. It is necessary, however, to provide a brief overview of what the Games left behind in the Greek capital.

As the research reported here showed, it is widely believed in Athens that the two most important and obvious positive effects of the Olympic Games have been the impressive improvement in infrastructure, particularly transportation related (figure 7.4), and the change of the city's international image. What is not convincing as yet is the effect of the Games on the city's regeneration and development prospects with two pertaining issues of criticism. The first is the apparent lack of a comprehensive strategic plan for the city for the period after the end of the Games (Beriatos and Gospodini 2004). The second has to do with the obvious choice not to concentrate redevelopment projects on a declined area of the agglomeration but to scatter projects all over the city; a choice

Figure 7.4: Athens: Map of transportation infrastructure



and they even got the roof on the main stadium” The Times; “So much unpredictability in a frame of such beautiful blue. The Athens Games were a triumph” The Telegraph (quoted in SETE 2004)

which is criticised for limiting the focus and potential of such projects (Beriatos and Gospodini 2004). A major element of the preparation of Athens for the Games has been the decision not to build temporary constructions but permanent ones, “to be re-designed, re-constructed and re-used after 2004” (Beriatos and Gospodini 2004:192), an element that, despite delays and the above mentioned lack of a strategic plan, demonstrates potential to positively influence the urban fabric. Table 7.1 attempts a summary of the Legacy of the Athens 2004 Olympics, while Figure 7.5 locates the various interventions on the map of the region. Of course not all the projects included in the table were designed and completed for the Olympic Games but the Games undoubtedly worked as a catalyst for their implementation. As Coccosis *et al.* (2003:7) state, “the basic difference of several projects that were characterised Olympic is that they were pushed earlier in the timetable”.

It is important to make a few observations on some of those projects:

- The unification of the archaeological sites has certainly been the most successful and the one that changed the appearance and feeling of the centre of Athens (figure 7.6).
- The dramatic improvement of public transport infrastructure has certainly made a difference but has not yet managed to change the transport behaviour of Athenians (and therefore the traffic congestion problem) since it was combined with improvements reinforcing the use of the car. The number of new cars rises by an approximate 100,000 per year in Attica - only in the first half of 2007 120,000 new cars were put in circulation (Tzanavara 2007).
- The waterfront redevelopment of Faliro can give a much needed gateway to the sea and the metropolitan park planned for Elliniko is definitely needed but its fate is still debated.

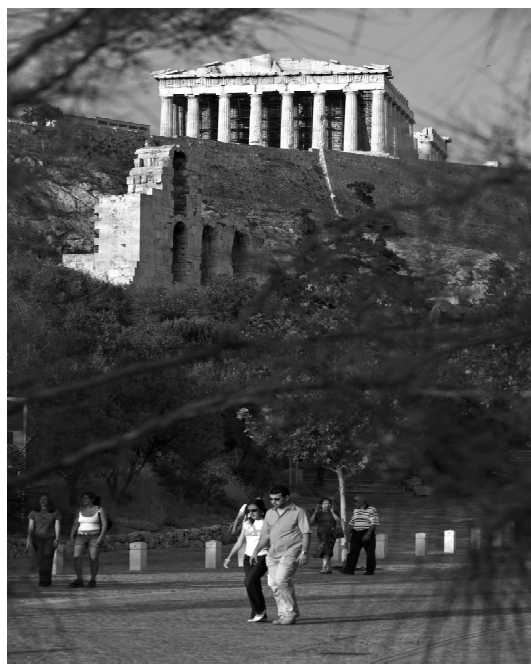
Table 7.1: Legacy of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games

Transportation	
Direct effect of Athens 2004	Indirect influence on project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tram</li> <li>• Renovation of all electricos (now Metro line 1) stations</li> <li>• Renewed bus fleet</li> <li>• Improvements in road network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New international airport</li> <li>• Newly built Metro</li> <li>• Attiki Odos (ring road)</li> <li>• Proastiakos (suburban light-railway)</li> </ul>
Regeneration	
Direct effect of Athens 2004	Indirect influence on project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waterfront development in Faliro (a much needed gateway to the sea with great potential for residents and visitors alike – under construction)</li> <li>• Athens Olympic Centre (redevelopment of the area around the Olympic facilities by Santiago Calatrava including the roof of the main stadium which serves as a new landmark for the city – very limited access however, outside sport events)</li> <li>• Social Housing (the Olympic Village is transformed into social housing)</li> <li>• Smaller facilities (e.g. leisure centres in Goudi and Galatsi complexes, university departments in Nikaia, museum and ministry of health in Marousi, school of performing arts in Ano Liossia, student dormitories in Panepistimioupoli)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unification of Archaeological Sites (a network of pedestrian streets connecting major archaeological sites including redevelopment of major squares, which has literary transformed the look and feeling of the city centre)</li> <li>• Elliniko (the site of the former airport, which is planned to be transformed into a metropolitan park)</li> </ul>
Tourism	
Direct effect of Athens 2004	Indirect influence on project
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive renovation of hotels (especially in higher categories)</li> <li>• Conference halls (renovation of existing conference facilities and plans for construction of a new large hall)</li> <li>• Renovation of National Archaeological Museum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Museum of the Acropolis</li> </ul>
Attitude	
Direct effect of Athens 2004	Indirect influence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Athens Tourism and Economic Development Agency (first marketing agency in the AMA)</li> <li>• Newly found appreciation of collaboration (temporarily during the Games)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Private Partnerships (new legal framework and government support)</li> <li>• No change regarding the car dependency so evident in Athens</li> </ul>

Figure 7.5: Athens: Map of Olympic Venues



Figure 7.6: The Acropolis and part of the Unification



One obvious benefit from hosting the Olympic Games is the extensive TV and press coverage. 300 TV stations from 203 countries broadcasted a total of 35,000 hours. Furthermore, a total of 21,500 journalists visited and got to know Athens in order to cover the Games (SETE 2004). As one of the interviewees said, “...the Olympics brought TV hours that money can not buy and they brought the city close to people all over the world in a way that no marketing tool could ever do”. A further,

perhaps more important aspect is that the Olympic Games forced Greeks to discover the power and necessity of cooperation. The common goal of the success of the Games was a unique opportunity for local tourism authorities and organisations to collaborate and operate jointly towards that goal (Tsouanas 2006). As the Association of Greek Tourism Enterprises assessed, "...such features as professionalism, long-term vision, shared objectives [...] and collaborative attitude were enhanced and improved" (SETE 2004). The scale of the event was such that neither the public sector nor private companies were able to handle on their own, not only in building the infrastructure but also in providing other services necessary for the Games. For instance, there is now an improved know-how in the catering industry and other service provision sectors, which could be used to develop new dynamics in those sectors. Specifically concerning tourism development prospects, it can be summarised that Athens has upgraded and continues to improve its tourism product, especially in terms of accessibility to and within the city, renewed interesting sites, new conference facilities and upgraded hotel availability. Signs are hopeful concerning both quantity and quality of tourism, with hotel arrivals for the year 2006 growing by 9.8%, five-star hotels witnessing arrivals growth of 12.5%, while for four-star hotels the figure reached 17% (Coccossis 2007:26). If Athens builds on this improvement with a comprehensive marketing plan based on extensive cooperation and agreement, the goal to establish the city as a major urban destination seems viable. However, the city's reaction to the opportunities created by the Games has certainly been slow. The large conference centre is still only a plan, the Falirou redevelopment is not ready, most other facilities remain underused and the strategic marketing plan is still only a suggestion. It seems fair to conclude that although Athens did get the push it needed from the Olympic Games, another difficult task is ahead: to take serious action.

### ***7.5 The image of Athens***

As already stated above, it is widely believed in Athens that the Olympic Games of 2004 had a very strong positive effect on the city's international image and reputation. The success of the Games is thought to have changed older negative associations with the city and to have resulted in a positive re-branding. As stated, for instance, in a government evaluation of the Games, "[h]osting the Olympic Games acted as a catalyst for urban redevelopment enabling changes, which might normally have taken several decades, to be completed over a seven-year period. The goal of re-branding both the city of Athens and Greece has been achieved" (Tatsiopoulos and Tziralis 2007:78). It is necessary to examine the accuracy of this point in more detail starting with the major findings of recent surveys on the image of Athens:

- The first is a survey undertaken by Leo Burnett in the UK, which evaluated the image of 50 cities around the world for the British public (Leo Burnett 2005). Athens scores well as it is evaluated the 8<sup>th</sup> most attractive destination worldwide and it is the 4<sup>th</sup> European destination most likely to recommend to friends. At the same time, however, quality of the living environment in Athens is assessed only at the 22<sup>nd</sup> place.

- The second is a research undertaken by the Greek company Metron Analysis (Metron Analysis 2005, quoted in Tsouanas 2006). The average number of days spent in Athens is 4 days, with 24.2% of the visitors spending more than 7 days in the city. This, together with the fact that Athens was the final destination for 6 out of 10 visitors, is an interesting sign of a changing attitude towards the city in comparison with the past. It is interesting and indicative of the most effective communication channels that visitors to Athens gathered information on the city mostly from word of mouth (37.8%), the internet (33.4%), their travel agents (27%) and only 19.3% were informed through advertisements. Local culture and history were by far the most important stated source of interest in Athens (78.5%) with 39.9% the sun/sea combination and 35% relaxation. Visitors who expressed their satisfaction with their visit to Athens amounted to an impressive 90.6%.

- In another recent research on the image that visitors held of Athens, Christou (no date) showed that concerning the quality of public transport, Athens scored a high 4.3 in a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being excellent performance and a 3.6 for being an exciting city. The evaluation of cleanliness lies a bit lower than the middle (2.6). First time visitors assess their general impression of the city compared to their impression before visiting it as below the middle (2.3). Perhaps the most interesting result is the comparison of assessments of the overall image of Athens as a tourism destination made before the visit (a high 4.6) and after the visit (a much lower 3.5).

- Tourism professionals that visited the City Break Expo 2006, agreed (100%) that Athens has significant monuments-symbols, 97% agreed that Athens is a cultural tourism destination, 73% would recommend Athens as a city-break, 37% for summer vacation and 33% for incentives-travel ([www.cityofathens.gr](http://www.cityofathens.gr)).

What the results of the above described researches show is a certain change and improvement in the perception of Athens, accompanied by contradictions in terms of the effects that the Olympic Games had on the international image of Athens. First of all, the Metron Analysis research showed that the Olympic Games had influenced only one fourth of visitors, with 72.4% stating that they were not influenced at all. Athens seems to be equally a leisure-tourism and a business-tourism destination. For example, according to the Metron Analysis research 61.1% of visitors were on a holidays/tourism trip and 34.2% on a business-related trip, whereas the Christou

research showed that 41% of visitors came to Athens for a business-related visit (24% business trip and 17% conference and congress) and the City Break Expo 2006 research showed that 44% visited Athens for business reasons and 44% for leisure. Despite these contradictions, the image of Athens as a tourism destination indeed seems to have changed to the better in recent years, although it is difficult to connect the change to hosting the Olympic Games. Perceptions show signs of change to an improved appreciation of the city and its region that even if not directly attributed to the Games might be an indirect result of the preparation for the Olympic Games and their legacy.

Things are not so positive when the perception of Athens as a business location is examined. According to the European Cities Monitor (2006), in the 2006 list of overall best European cities to locate a business Athens is ranked 32<sup>nd</sup> out of 33. In 2005 it was ranked 30<sup>th</sup> out of 30 (European Cities Monitor 2005), in 2002 28<sup>th</sup> of 30 and, interestingly, in 1990 it had scored better (22<sup>nd</sup> of 25). Familiarity with the city as a business location shows a minimal increase to 28% (from 25% in 2005 and 31% in 2002). Despite the investment and preparation for the Olympics, only 3% of respondents think that Athens is doing the most to improve itself compared to the other 32 cities. Connected to that, in terms of both external transport links to other cities and internal transport, Athens remains ranked in the last place. In terms of the climate governments create for business, Athens falls ten positions to the 29<sup>th</sup> (from 19<sup>th</sup> in 2005) and quality of life for employees is ranked 30<sup>th</sup> (27<sup>th</sup> in 2005). However, in 2006 the number of companies expecting to locate in the city in the next five years is 15 surpassed only by some cities in Central-eastern Europe and London. In 2003 the relevant number was 9 and it was surpassed by several cities in both eastern and western Europe.

A very interesting point to be made here is the response of the city's own residents. It is argued that "this [Olympic] legacy, although it can not be assessed fully in quantifiable terms, redefined the city's global image, but also – and more importantly – had a major effect on people's attitude and culture. Athenians today are more extrovert, more open-minded, more confident than ever and the society's collective upgrade is without doubt another important impact triggered by the Olympic event" (Tatsiopoulos and Tziralis 2007:84). Unfortunately the last part about the attitude of people in Athens seems not to be the case. It is intriguing to contrast here that the residents of the Greek capital seem to be the most dissatisfied city residents in Europe according to the latest Urban Audit Survey, which measures the satisfaction of the residents of 75 European cities with the city they live in or, put differently, the city's internal image. In the results of this survey, Athens disappointingly figures in the very last place (Urban Audit Perception Survey 2007). Furthermore, Athens ranks 25<sup>th</sup> in the quality of the public transport and only 12<sup>th</sup> from the end in how reasonably the city spends its resources. An explanation for this dissatisfaction in a period when Athens indeed saw the largest investment and infrastructure improvement in its recent history, may be the one given by one of the participants in the research reported here, namely that "the Olympics gave a feeling of



pride to all Greeks and showed us what improving our quality of life means". Athenians could have a taste of what their city could be like during those few weeks in the summer of 2004 and it is this taste and the great hope it created that they compare with the situation they are familiar with for many years; a comparison that leads to expressing a justifiable disappointment.

With the evidence from all the above surveys, it is safe to conclude that the Olympic Games (and all development efforts) did have an impact on the city's image as a tourism destination (although not as significant as expected) but not on the evaluation of other aspects. It is, therefore, obvious that there is a dire need to implement wider improvement strategies that would cover all functions of the city and particularly focus on the residents' own perceptions and experiences. Devising a comprehensive marketing strategy that will also include other fields than tourism is an urgent need for the Greek capital.

### ***7.6 City marketing in post-Olympic Athens: A newly found direction?***

After 2004 there is evidence of a newly found appreciation of place marketing in Greece and, particularly, city marketing in Athens. The most important signs of this change are the establishment of the Athens Tourism and Economic Development Agency and the first thought-through promotional campaign of the Attica region, both of which are described in detail below. The Olympic Games have clearly caused this newly found marketing direction in the Greek Capital. The stated reason of everything that is done in the region after 2004 and concerns economic prospects, tourism development, the image of the city but also urban development in general, is the explicit attempt to capitalise on the supposed positive effects that the Games had on the city. How positive these effects were could be doubted (see above) but it is perhaps enough that they seem to mobilise the city's authorities. Explicitly stated by all interviewees as the reason that Athens is slowly attempting the first steps towards a more comprehensive marketing strategy was the desire to take further advantage of certain dynamics generated by hosting the 2004 Olympics and, especially, to maintain the new, higher status of the city's image and international reputation.

As a beginning and in accordance with the vast majority of cities around the world, the marketing effort of Athens focuses on tourism development with the clear goal to make Athens a top city-break destination in Europe. The focus on tourism is understandable considering first that tourism has always been a major source of income and employment both for the city and for Greece, secondly that Athens does demonstrate significant potential of development and interest for visitors in terms of history, culture and climate and thirdly that the Olympic Games indeed placed Athens in

the centre of world attention, which the city should be able to further exploit, especially in terms of attracting foreign visitors. For the time being this seems to be the only goal of the marketing effort but it is hoped that this will only signify the beginning of a more thorough approach towards marketing and the other economic and social goals it may support.

### **7.6.1 Athens Tourism and Economic Development Agency**

A significant development that might be considered the most important effect of the Olympic Games on marketing Athens is the establishment by the Municipality of the Athens Tourism and Economic Development Agency (ATEDA), which was approved by the municipal council in February 2005. The Agency was set up with the aim to capitalise on the gains of hosting the Olympic Games for the future of tourism development in the city. It was, at last, understood that “Athens needs promotion as well as the cooperation of all tourism bodies in order to make the city a popular tourism destination all year round” ([www.cityofathens.gr](http://www.cityofathens.gr)). According to the general manager of the ATEDA, the Olympics played a catalytic role in realising the necessity for marketing in general and for setting-up the Agency. It became obvious to all that it was a vital need to create an organisation that would, at last, coordinate the existing activity, design and implement new actions, record and analyse the tourism product of Athens and then go on to create a marketing and branding system. Moreover, most current staff of the Agency used to be staff in Athens 2004. The Agency is a non-profit Public Private Partnership with the following participants: The Municipality of Athens, The Hotel Chamber of Greece, the Association of Tourism Enterprises of Greece (SETE), the Association of Travel Agents of Greece and the Greek Association of Retailers. The resources allocated to the Agency (around 350,000 Euros, from which 300,000 provided by the Municipality) are admittedly inadequate but they have allowed the first steps of selecting human resources and attempting to create further funding opportunities through private sponsoring and specific European Union Programmes, for instance.

Strategic goal of the organisation is to establish Athens as a top city break destination within Europe, a goal chosen because evidence shows that city break trips make for 60% of urban tourism trips and will grow in the coming years. The ATEDA has devised and is implementing a strategic plan for the tourism development of Athens, which consists of four axes: tourism strategy, promotion and communication, conference and exhibition tourism and economic development ([www.cityofathens.gr](http://www.cityofathens.gr)). The strategic action plan includes such actions as the organisation of the European City Break exhibition in 2007, the redevelopment of the historic inner city through EU programmes, the promotion of a new image of Athens abroad, networking and strategic cooperation

nationally and internationally, the participation in international tourism fairs, the development of print and electronic promotional material and a new website. In order to achieve the stated goal to make Athens a popular city break destination, the plan is to reinforce conference and cultural tourism, highlight monuments and facilitate their interpretation through modern methods, facilitate the flow of visitors in the city and create a crisis management plan on a functional and communicative level. Together with the ATEDA, the Athens Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB) was also set up with participants, apart from the municipality, the Hoteliers Association of Attica, the Association of Greek Exhibitions and Conference Organisers and the Association of Travel and Tourism Agents. The two organisations will work together to support business tourism, conference tourism and incentive travels.

Cooperation with other parties has so far not been extensive but it is widely understood that it is necessary. There is, for example, cooperation with the Region of Attica on a project to create and signal specific tourist routes in the city. According to officials of the ATEDA, the government prioritises the regions over local authorities, which is perceived as a problem because the regions are allocated the funding but do not have their own marketing or promotion departments and they are forced to hire outside consultants. The Ministry of Tourism is in a process of identifying a suitable structure for promotional activities and the suggestion of ATEDA is to support Public Private Partnerships in order to overcome the non-flexible and bureaucratic state system and the resistance to change that the Greek public sector demonstrates. The concrete proposal of the ATEDA on utilising the new infrastructure and capitalising on the positive image of Athens after the Olympic Games is that it depends on three preconditions that have to be met:

- First, the creation of a metropolitan-level structure or, at least, cooperation. The ideal for them would be to create a Metropolitan Municipality (an idea shared explicitly by all interviewees) but a metropolitan-level Tourism Board might also prove adequate. It is argued, for instance, that although the available funds of the municipality alone are certainly not enough to design and implement comprehensive marketing plans and campaigns, all together the municipality, the region of Attica, the four prefectures of Attica and the other municipalities can collect a sufficiently large amount allocated to promotion of the region.
- Second, the creation and implementation of a long-term strategic development and promotion plan (in the metropolitan level again), which will include the analysis of current and future conditions, suggested actions, a clear allocation of roles to all participants and clear measurable objectives.

- Third, close cooperation with the tourism sector and other sectors involved in developing and managing the tourism product of Athens not only in implementation but, especially, in the decision-making phase.

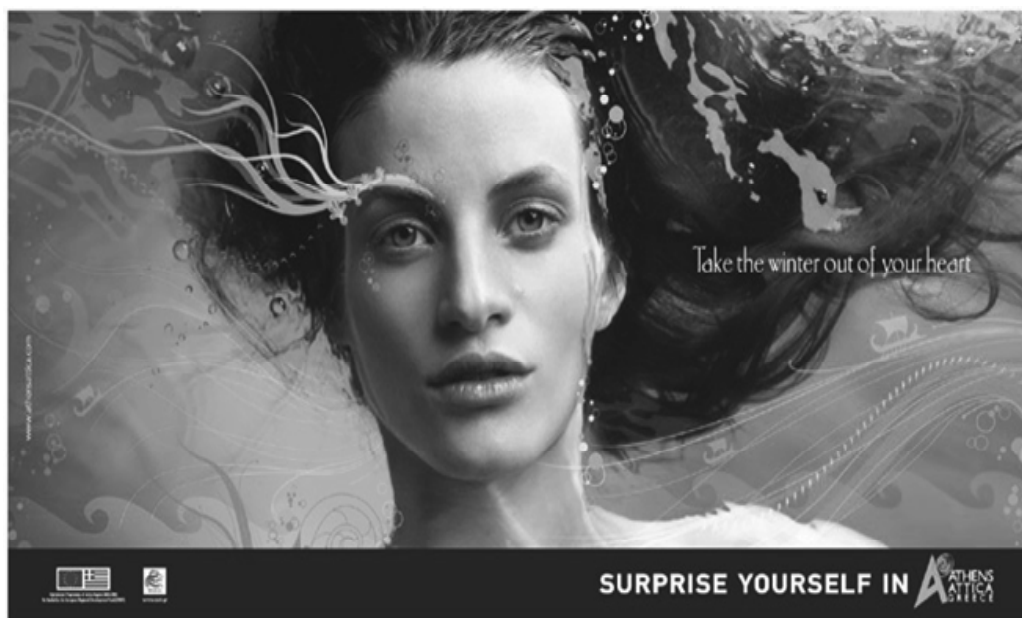
It is worth mentioning here that interviewees from outside the Agency considered the establishment of the ATEDA a significant initiative and a good first step but explicitly expressed their hesitation as to its potential, mostly due to the lack of adequate financial resources. The necessity of an organisation to coordinate marketing in Athens has been a vital need for many years. With the ATEDA the hopeful first step is taken and to the right direction; what is now needed is to acquire the political and, consequently, financial support necessary. It remains to be seen whether the agency will manage to overcome obstacles and play the leading role it should play in the marketing effort of the city. A further hopeful aspect is that such organisations develop their own dynamics just as a result of their existence and operation. There is certainly a chance that ATEDA may mobilise other organisations or structures that will support and refine marketing implementation in Athens. For that to happen, there seems to be only one way forward. Now that ATEDA (the only marketing organisation of the Athens Metropolitan Area) exists, it should be expanded to the metropolitan or regional level. If that does not happen (and soon) and ATEDA remains a municipal Agency (of a municipality that represents less than one fourth of the area's population), common sense suggests that it will also remain an under-funded organisation with limited influence and unable to take advantage of its own potential.

### 7.6.2 “Surprise your self in Athens-Attica”

It is accepted in this thesis (see chapters 3, 8 and 9), in accordance with most relevant literature (e.g. Ashworth and Voogd 1990; Kotler *et al.* 1999), that place marketing is much more than promotion, which is only a fraction of a comprehensive marketing strategy and constitutes only one of a series of necessary marketing measures (Ashworth and Voogd 1994). Promotional activities, however, are indeed necessary and, if used properly and are set in a wider marketing context, do have an active role to play (see chapters 3, 8 and 9). For the first time in its long history, Athens and the region of Attica designed a thought-through communication strategy and a comprehensive promotional campaign in the years 2005-2006. The campaign was undertaken on behalf of the Region of Attica (financed through a Regional Operational Programme of the European Union) by the Greek branch of the international advertising agency Leo Burnett, who was the winner of the international tender for the project. Before the campaign, Leo Burnett utilised its international network and conducted a research on employees around the world in order to identify their perceptions of Athens, how they

would behave as tourists there, what they would like to see in the campaign etc; a method that, despite its apparent effectiveness, does raise questions on the appropriateness of the sample. The company went on to devise a concrete and thorough promotional plan for the region of Attica. The campaign dealt exclusively with tourism promotion and was based on two cornerstones. The first was to reinforce and take advantage of the element of a positive surprise generated by the success of the Olympic Games. The condition identified was that the changes that took place in the city with the newly built infrastructure, the effective preparation despite intense doubt before the Games and the success of the Games caused a pleasant surprise to international audiences and created a positive climate. The logic behind the content of the campaign was to take advantage of this positive climate and to emphasise the surprising element of Athens, also expressed in the chosen slogan: ‘Surprise your self in Athens Attica’ (figure 7.7).

Figure 7.7: Poster of the 2006 campaign and the new logo



The second cornerstone was the desire to suggest new aspects of the city and the region in an attempt to escape from certain stereotypes and overused promotional messages, such as the Sea, Sun and 'Tavernas in Plaka' elements.

The campaign was divided in two parts. The first addressed the residents of Attica aiming to provide them with a new image of their region and the leisure/excursion opportunities it offers them and attempting to change their point of view. This part consisted of four TV spots and many press prints featured in 66 Greek magazines and newspapers. The second part of the campaign focused on the two main origin countries of foreign visitors, namely Germany and the UK, as it was considered that the resources available were not adequate to cover more countries. This part consisted of several advertising methods. Two TV spots were created and broadcasted all over Europe through CNN and the Discovery Channel, three outdoor advertisements were used in the London underground, a bilingual website was developed ([www.athensattica.com](http://www.athensattica.com)) and several brochures were published in Greek, English, German and Russian. There was one general 27-page booklet and others on specific subjects, namely conference tourism, cultural tourism, cruising and yachting and one in limited number targeting opinion leaders in Greek and English. The development of a new logo for the region of Attica (figure 7.7) and participation in fairs, especially in Germany was also part of the campaign, which ran until the end of 2006.

The above described campaign was certainly a well ran communication plan and a good start of place promotion in Athens. Disappointingly, however, and despite the expectation and suggestion of Leo Burnett to continue the campaign for a longer period of time after the end of 2006, the campaign has been discontinued, with limited material available even in the region's new website.

## ***7.7 The future of marketing Athens***

An issue that emerged in all interviews in the city of Athens and comes across marketing related reports and documents (e.g. SETE 2004), as well as is discussed in the press (e.g. Kroustali 2003) is the comparison of Athens with Barcelona and the suggestion that the Barcelona model would be the most appropriate for Athens to follow. Considering the similar position of the two cities in the periphery of Europe, it seems logical for Athens to 'admire' the Barcelona case. It is doubtful, however, if at this moment (four years after the closing ceremony of the 2004 Olympics) it is possible to follow the example of the Catalan city. An elaborate discussion of this issue is outside the scope of this chapter, but as Beriatos and Gospodini (2004) outline, there are significant differences in the way the two cities prepared for and acted after the Games.

Another common point in the evaluations of all participants in this research was the need for more intensive and structured cooperation and coordination of marketing actions. An obvious solution to that is the establishment of a metropolitan level marketing organisation, perhaps through the appropriate expansion of the ATEDA described above. It is admittedly a difficult task under the current conditions but seems worth attempting. The structure of the Region of Attica might be another example to follow, with separate regional councils for certain sectors (tourism, economic development, environmental issues etc.) in which relevant organisations are called to participate. It is perhaps a hopeful sign that the two largest municipalities of Athens and Pireaus have recently signed a memorandum of cooperation on four key development aspects, including tourism development ([www.cityofathens.gr](http://www.cityofathens.gr)).

Apart from the need for cooperation, several other issues were identified by the participants in this research as urgent future needs for the marketing efforts of Athens. First, it is thought necessary to start a wide discussion on a common vision for the city; “how we would like Athens to be by 2030” (interview with executive secretary of Ministry of Tourism). Second, there is a recognised need for consistency in marketing and promotional messages sent to all audiences. Particularly for tourism development, there is a need for an intense and stable presence of the city in international media and tourism distribution channels. The current situation is one where for long periods there is nothing happening in terms of promoting Athens and then there are periods (like the one around the Olympics) when suddenly “we all work together with concrete goals and effectively” (interview with account manager of Leo Burnett Greece). Furthermore, every new action taken starts all over again from the beginning as if nothing else has taken place before that and ignoring tactics and messages used in the past. All these contribute to the lack of consistency, which is though a major precondition for marketing success. What is needed is to develop a specific marketing and promotional logic, obviously based on the above mentioned vision for the city, which, despite creative modifications, will be stable and will be able to create a consciousness of what Athens is about. Finally there is a recognised need to emphasise contemporary cultural creation together with the historical importance of the city. The ancient culture is of course fundamental and well known but it needs to be complemented by promoting modern Greek culture, especially by supporting local artistic creation. A safe conclusion is that Athens, without ignoring its past, does not want anymore to be overshadowed by the Acropolis (figure 7.8). This has been a steady request and complaint, for instance, of the major hotels of the city (Pournara 2007). Together with the improvement that has taken place in the city’s infrastructure and the hope for an improvement in the urban fabric, the better promotion of contemporary culture is one of the elements that will lead the way to a permanent perception of the city as “...a city to enjoy on its own terms, not just endure for the sake of its ancient monuments” (The Telegraph, quoted in Tsouanas 2006).

All these issues are indeed important and can significantly contribute not only to a better marketing tactic for the city of Athens but also to a wider understanding and use of its development potential in all functions of the city. There is, however, another prevailing

Figure 7.8: Promotional poster of the 1980's (left) and of 2003 (right) exhibiting the desire not to let the Acropolis overshadow the city's offer



issue that has already been touched upon in this chapter but needs underlining. There is a dire need for a change of mentality of both public authorities at all levels and people in general, in terms of their relations to public authorities. The success of two recent programmes of the municipality in engaging the citizens emphasises that need. The 'Clean Alliance' project included a public awareness campaign, new sanitation regulations and the doubling of the sanitation budget of the municipality. The 'Building Façades' was a programme of rebuilding – painting the facades, through which 3000



buildings in the city had a ‘facelift’ (the municipality offered a part of the necessary amount and the owners the rest). These two programmes have been successful in engaging the residents in the activities of the municipality, precisely because they showed a new mentality in that they made clear the benefits for the residents and they did deliver what they promised, therefore the residents were satisfied and then supported the projects warm-heartedly, a rare occasion for Greek reality.

Furthermore, the plan for redeveloping the site of the former airport at Elliniko into a metropolitan park contains selling one part of the site for residential development. This is connected with an intriguing (for anyone familiar with Greek politics and development plans) suggestion: part of the financial r to scatter projects all over the city; a choice evenue made by this ‘selling’ to developers will set up a so called ‘Greenery Fund’ which will be used, as the plan states, to widen streets and squares in declined areas of the centre of Athens and even demolish buildings in order to create new, green open spaces in the heart of the city. Does this suggestion signify a new mentality and a series of more radical interventions in order to address the acute problems of quality of life in Athens? Will city marketing be used to its full potential to assist to that direction? Only time will tell if such a change of mentality is possible, but the process seems to have started.